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SUBJECT: UAE Federal Cabinet Approves FTA negotiating Committee

11. (U) The UAE Cabinet, on February 7, formally approved establishment of a committee to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. According to the Cabinet decision, the committee would negotiate "within the framework of the Ministry of Finance and Industry's efforts on the issue." The goals of the council, according to local press will be to enhance the UAE economy, encourage exports, attract foreign investment and technology, and boost opportunities for the UAE private sector. UAE media juxtaposed with the Cabinet statement Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs E. Anthony Wayne's

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February 7 press conference remarks on the start of FTA negotiations in March.

12. (U) Minister of State for Financial and Industrial Affairs, Mohammed Khalfan bin Khirbash and Minister of Economy and Planning Shaikha Lubna Al-Qasimi will co-chair the FTA Committee. The committee will consist of representatives from the MFA, Ministry of Finance and Industry, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Ministry of Culture and Information, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Energy, the Central Bank, the Federal Customs Authority, the Federal Environmental Authority, the Emirates Authority for Standardization and Meteorology, the Abu Dhabi Department of Economy and Planning, the Dubai Ports, Customs, and Free Zones Corporation, and the Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency.

13. (SBU) In a February 6 conversation with EconChief, MinFin A/US for Revenue and Budget Khalid Al-Bustani explained that the UAEG would provide its list of lead negotiators to USTR after the cabinet officially approved the make-up of the delegation. He confirmed that UAEG officials were preparing for the negotiations (using the Bahrain FTA and other texts) and urged the USG to

deliver the draft negotiating text as soon as possible.

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